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February 1, 2016

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
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From: Sachi A. Hamai
Chief Executive Officer

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MOTION TO SUPPORT AN AMENDMENT ON A FEDERAL REVIEW OF THE CAUSE AND RESPONSE TO THE ALISO CANYON NATURAL GAS LEAK (ITEM NO. 32-B, SUPPLEMENTAL AGENDA OF FEBRUARY 2, 2016)

Item No. 32-B, on the February 2, 2016 Supplemental Agenda, is a motion by Supervisor Antonovich to direct our Washington, D.C. advocates to support an amendment by Senators Boxer and Feinstein to direct the Energy Secretary to lead a federal review of the cause and the response to the natural gas leak at the Southern California Gas Company's Aliso Canyon Natural Gas Storage Facility, once introduced, and to send a 5-signature letter to the Los Angeles County Congressional Delegation expressing the Board's support.

Background

On October 23, 2015, a natural gas leak was discovered by the Southern California Gas Company at its Aliso Canyon Natural Gas Storage Field, which is adjacent to homes in the Porter Ranch neighborhood. Numerous residents in the Porter Ranch area have complained that strong odors from the gas leak have resulted in nausea, dizziness, vomiting, shortness of breath, and headaches. On January 6, 2016, Governor Brown issued a proclamation that declared the gas leak situation an emergency. To date, over 4,400 households have been relocated from the Porter Ranch area, with many other households awaiting relocation.

On January 29, 2016, Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein issued a press release announcing that they will introduce an amendment that would direct Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz to lead a federal review of the cause and the response to the natural gas leak at the Southern California Gas Company's Aliso Canyon Natural Gas

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Storage Facility. Under the amendment, Secretary Moniz would lead a task force, which would include representatives from the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, and Departments of the Interior, Commerce, and Health and Human Services. According to the press release, the task force would review and make recommendations on "whether to continue operations at Aliso Canyon and other facilities in close proximity to residential populations based on an assessment of the risk of a future natural gas leak." The task force also will make recommendations on immediate steps that could assist in solving the Aliso Canyon gas leak.

This amendment would be offered to S. 2012 (Murkowski, R-AK), the Energy Policy Modernization Act of 2015, which currently is on the Senate floor. The bill reflects a bipartisan effort to overhaul the nation's energy policies. Its outlook is uncertain because over 200 floor amendments to the bill have been filed thus far, including some highly partisan amendments, which, if adopted, could end its bipartisan support or prompt a Presidential veto. If the Senate passes S. 2012, it would have to be reconciled with H.R. 8, the North American Energy Security and Infrastructure Act, which the House passed, 249 to 174 along party lines, on December 3, 2015. The President has threatened to veto H.R. 8 if it reaches his desk because it "would undermine already successful initiatives designed to modernize the Nation's energy infrastructure and increase our energy efficiency," and move away from fossil fuels and reducing carbon emissions.

Conclusion

This office and the Department of Public Health recommend approval of the motion because the amendment's proposed federal review of the Aliso Canyon natural gas leak could be of help in developing and implementing measures to solve and mitigate the impacts of this gas leak and preventing and responding to similar incidents in the future. There is currently no existing Board policy relating to a federal review of the cause and the response to the natural gas leak at the Southern California Gas Company's Aliso Canyon Natural Gas Storage Facility. **Therefore, support for this amendment is a matter for Board determination.**

We will continue to keep you advised.

SAH:JJ:MR
MT:gl

c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel